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SIPDIS

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TAGS: SNAR PGOV PINR KCRM KJUS NI GT  
SUBJECT: CICIG INVESTIGATING NICARAGUAN BUS KILLINGS

REF: A. GUATEMALA 1430  
1B. GUATEMALA 387  
1C. GUATEMALA 924

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Drew Blakeney for reasons 1.4(b,d).

Summary

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11. (S) With the assistance of the Nicaraguan Police, CICIG and Guatemalan authorities under its supervision appear to be making good progress in their investigation of the November 8 murders of the 16 occupants of a Nicaraguan bus in eastern Guatemala. The murders appear to have been related to a turf battle between rival Guatemalan narcotics gangs; Guatemalan police appear to have been complicit in the crime. CICIG believes that Deputy Police Director Rember Larios is trying to mislead investigators. For reasons that remain unclear, Nicaragua's Ambassador to Guatemala has dropped all involvement in pressing for an investigation into the matter.

End Summary.

Excellent Cooperation with Nicaraguan Police

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12. (SBU) CICIG investigators accompanied by Guatemalan authorities from the National Civilian Police (PNC), Attorney General's Office (Public Ministry, MP), and the Directorate for Criminal Investigations (DICRI) visited Nicaragua Dec. 1-5 as part of the investigation of the Nov. 8 murders of 16 bus passengers (ref a). In Managua, according to the CICIG prosecutor overseeing the case, they had very productive meetings with representatives of the Intelligence Unit of the Nicaraguan Police, among others. Based in large measure on inputs from Nicaraguan intelligence sources, CICIG and Guatemalan authorities have pieced together the following version of events.

Traffickers Fell Into Hands of Rival Gang

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13. (S) Martha Reyneris Castro Rivera, a Nicaraguan national who died on board the bus, bought it several months ago for the express purpose of trafficking cocaine to Guatemala's notorious Lorenzana Family. She used income she received from an unidentified narcotics trafficker in Miami to help pay for the bus. The bus owner and operators (Carlos Miguel Paiz Castillo and Jose Abraham Paiz Vanegas) had made only a few trips from Chichigalpa, Nicaragua to Guatemala prior to the fatal one that ended on November 8. The Lorenzanas had paid in advance for a cocaine shipment the traffickers had brought on one of the most recent trips, but the amount delivered was less than that agreed. This trip was to deliver the missing cocaine to the Lorenzanas -- 125 kilos hidden in a false compartment in the roof in the personal custody of the only non-Nicaraguan on the bus, Dutch national Robert Andres Krimpen Aandelek. Of the 16 persons on board

the bus, the Dutch national and six Nicaraguans (including the aforementioned persons and Ramon Aquiles Martinez Marin, deported from the U.S. in 2004 for drugs charges; the identities of the remaining two have not been determined) were involved in narcotics trafficking. The remaining nine were innocent small merchants from the Chinandega area of Nicaragua who regularly traveled to Guatemala to purchase wares for resale in Nicaragua.

¶4. (S) At approximately 0300 hrs. on November 8, Guatemalan national police stopped the bus at Jalpatagua, Jutiapa Department, in eastern Guatemala. A bus passenger interrupted a cell phone call he had made to a family member in Nicaragua to say they had been pulled over by Guatemalan police. The police turned the bus over to Ever Paredes Qpolice. The police turned the bus over to Ever Paredes Ayala, nephew of Juan Mario "El Gordo" Paredes, who was extradited to the U.S. on narcotics charges. CICIG believes Paredes to be the leader of a new narcotics trafficking group in eastern Guatemala that preys on rival narcotics trafficking shipments coming through the area. Allegedly accompanying Paredes were Ubelino Perez Cordova, Jorge Rene Garcia Noguera (AKA "JR"), Marvin Montiel Marin (AKA "El Taquero" and "El Barba"), and Rolando David Cantoral Marin, as well as ten unidentified gunmen. Paredes reportedly works with associates in El Salvador who inform him of drugs shipments bound for Guatemala. Montiel Marin is known to have had contacts with PNC officers who also worked with imprisoned former Congressman Manuel Castillo Garcia of Jutiapa, suspected of masterminding the February 2007 murders of three Salvadoran deputies to the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN). Additionally, the Paredes family is known to have sold the BMW SUV used in the attack on the PARLACEN deputies.

¶5. (S) Paredes and his associates moved the bus to Teculutan, Zacapa Department, and at 0830 hrs. parked it in a melon field near the Pan-American highway, according to local witnesses, where it remained until 1930 hrs. At some point during the day, all of the bus occupants were killed; eleven were decapitated. The Guatemalan traffickers then moved the bus close to La Fragua, Zacapa Department, to a site just two kilometers from a facility the Lorenzanas use to store drugs and arms. The area is known to be under the control of the Lorenzana Family. There the attackers set fire to the bus at 2010 hrs. The fire was so hot that it incinerated most of the victims' teeth, and reminded the attending INACIF forensic examiners of a similarly intense fire that had destroyed the PARLACEN deputies' vehicle. To date, DNA investigators in Granada, Spain have been able to identify only six of the 16 bodies.

¶6. (S) The CICIG prosecutor told Pol/Econ Counselor that he believed the selection of the location for the burning, well inside the area dominated by the Lorenzanas, had been a signal that Paredes and his group intended to contest the Lorenzanas' control of the area. The Paredes group's challenge to the status quo presented a problem for the Lorenzanas similar to that presented by deceased trafficker Juan Leon. Mexican "Zetas" murdered Juan Leon and several bodyguards on March 25 in Zacapa (refs b and c). The CICIG prosecutor said the Lorenzanas appear tolerant of the "Zetas'" new presence in the area, and may even have entered into agreement in order to continue operating in the area. If that is so, the Paredes group might soon find itself in conflict with the "Zetas."

#### Police Interfering in Investigation?

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¶7. (S) The CICIG prosecutor said PNC Deputy Director Rember Larios was trying to mislead CICIG in its investigation of this case. Offering no supporting evidence, he told CICIG that the bus had been carrying 25 kilos of cocaine when it ran into a "DEA patrol" inside El Salvador near the Guatemalan border. The DEA agents had impounded the drugs, made no arrests, and then let the bus continue on its journey. The intended Guatemalan recipients of the drugs were furious that the traffickers had arrived empty-handed,

and so killed them. CICIG found this version to be preposterous, and immediately discarded it.

Nicaraguan Ambassador Refrains from Involvement

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¶8. (C) On Dec. 8, Pol/Econ Couns discussed the murders with Nicaraguan Ambassador to Guatemala Silvio Mora, former spokesman of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. Mora asserted that the bus had been traveling the same route for years bearing petty merchants from the Chinandega area. Paiz Castillo and Paiz Vanegas "may have had some criminal record in El Salvador related to narcotics trafficking," he said, but asserted that everyone else on the bus had been innocent.

Mora said that despite his initial, public demands for justice, he had since decided to defer all action on the case to Iury Orozco at the Foreign Ministry in Managua. He feared for his personal safety, and was also somewhat concerned that Foreign Minister Rodas had privately chided him for "failing to use diplomatic language" in his initial public statements.

Another Nicaraguan Embassy employee reportedly told a CICIG Q Another Nicaraguan Embassy employee reportedly told a CICIG investigator that Mora had changed his public stance not because he feared for his public safety, but rather because President Ortega had instructed him to drop the matter. The Colom Government has also not publicly addressed the killings since making initial statements of concern.

Comment

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¶9. (S) CICIG appears to be making good progress in investigating this terrible crime. We are encouraged that, with CICIG as an intermediary, the Nicaraguan Police helpfully shared information with Guatemalan police, who have a reputation among their regional counterparts for corruption and complicity in narcotrafficking. There are several indications that Guatemalan PNC officers may have been complicit in this crime, and we are concerned by Deputy PNC Director Larios' alleged interference in the investigation. The possibility of a link to the PARLACEN murders is an interesting one which we will continue to discuss with CICIG.

It is unclear why Ambassador Mora has changed his approach to this case, but it is clear that he has dropped it. The cold-blooded murder, decapitation, and burning of the bodies of the 16 occupants of the ill-fated bus continues to generate alarm among Guatemalans, who increasingly blame the Colom Administration for not providing citizen security.

McFarland